

# SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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December 27, 2007

**TO:** All Design Review Board Members

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**SUBJECT: South San Francisco Ferry Terminal, City of South San Francisco, San Mateo County;  
First Pre-Application Review**  
(For Board consideration on January 7, 2008)

## Project Summary

**Project Sponsor:** Water Transit Authority (WTA)

**Project Representatives:** John Sindzinski, WTA; Boris Dramov, ROMA Design Group

**Project Site.** The proposed ferry terminal would be located in the East Basin of the Oyster Point Marina/Park ("marina") located at the intersection of Oyster Point Boulevard and Marina Boulevard, in the City of South San Francisco. The project site is located approximately two miles north of the San Francisco International Airport and approximately ten miles south of San Francisco. To the north of the marina is the Oyster Point Business Park and to the south is a United Parcel Service (UPS) facility and the Genentech campus. The marina is owned by the City of South San Francisco and operated by the San Mateo County Harbor District under a Joint Powers Agreement with the City. The marina is an approximately 46-acre facility built on top of a capped landfill that includes a boat launch ramp, fishing pier, bait shop, small boat marine service and sales center, restaurants and offices, picnic facilities, parking for approximately 600 cars, and a 33-acre park with a hiking and jogging trail, and a 2.5-acre sandy beach. At the center of the marina, an approximately 400-foot-long and 130-foot-wide mole divides the east and west basins where a total of approximately 589 boat slips are located. The ferry terminal would be constructed just east of the mole, within the East Basin of the marina and within an area now occupied by the slips at Gates 9 and 10. Currently, an approximately ten-foot-wide Bay Trail pathway runs along the entire shoreline of the marina.

**Proposed Project.** The proposed project involves the construction of an approximately 11,812-square-foot ferry terminal that includes a viewing terrace, a pier, a gangway, and ferry floats for two berths, and the construction of Bay trail connections at the site or the payment of in-lieu fees to complete these connections. The entrance to the ferry terminal would consist of an approximately 2,672-square-foot viewing terrace elevated three feet above the prevailing grade and extending out over the shoreline and Bay. The viewing terrace would be open to the sky and include two ADA-compliant access ramps, stairs, and an approximately 10-foot, 8-inch-wide and 167-foot-long viewing area with approximately 14 benches for sitting and viewing purposes. Extending from the viewing terrace would be an approximately 180-foot-long and 19-foot-wide covered pier leading to the ferry floats. During ferry operation hours, approximately 150 feet of the covered pier would be opened for public access and provide a protected waiting area for ferry passengers. The remaining portion of the pier, the gangway and the ferry floats would be accessible only by disembarking and embarking passengers when the ferries are berthed.



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The project would also involve the construction of Bay trail connections at the site or a monetary contribution to accomplish these connections. The project sponsor has suggested three possible connections that would connect ferry passengers to the offices located north and south of the marina: these connections are described below.

**Public Access.** The proposed public access improvements for this project include:

1. An approximately 2,672-square-foot viewing terrace at the entrance to the ferry terminal that includes an approximately 1,600-square-foot sitting area with 14 benches.
2. An approximately 2,800-square-foot portion of the 3,420-square-foot covered ferry pier, open to the public during ferry operation hours.
3. Three possible trail connections or a monetary contribution to cover the cost needed to complete these connections. Option 1 would enhance an existing connection from the ferry terminal to the south by widening and repaving an existing four-foot path to 10 feet. Option 2 would create two new segments on the south side of the Marina: a six-foot-wide path that would connect to an existing pedestrian path to the east, and a 10-foot-wide path that would connect to a possible future connection across the Harbor Patrol parking lot to the ferry terminal. Option 3 would complete two, approximately 10-foot-wide and 40-foot-long portions of the Bay trail north of the Marina.

**Bay Plan Policies.** The *San Francisco Bay Plan's* policies on Public Access state that "a proposed fill project should increase public access to the Bay to the maximum extent feasible" and that the public access improvements "...should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay-related activities and movement to and along the shoreline..." The policies require that the *Public Access Design Guidelines* be used as a guide to siting and designing public access consistent with a proposed project. The Bay Plan policies on Appearance, Design and Scenic Views further state that "all bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay" and that "maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, from the Bay itself, and from the opposite shore." The policies further state that "towers, bridges, or other structures near or over the Bay should be designed as landmarks that suggest the location of the waterfront when it is not visible...." According to the Bay Plan policies on Transportation, "ferry terminals should be sited at locations that are near navigable channels..." and wherever possible, "near higher density, mixed-use development served by public transit." In addition, transportation projects on the Bay shoreline and bridges over the Bay "should include pedestrian and bicycle paths that will either be a part of the Bay Trail or connect the Bay Trail with other regional and community trails."

**Public Access Issues.** The staff believes that the project raises four primary issues for the Board to address in its review: (1) whether the proposed project provides adequate, usable and attractive public access spaces; (2) whether the proposed project maintains and enhances the visual quality of the Bay, shoreline and adjacent developments; (3) whether the proposed project provides adequate connections to and continuity along the shoreline; and (4) whether the proposed project is adequately designed to address the effect of sea level rise on public access areas.

1. **Does the proposed project provide adequate, usable, and attractive public access spaces?** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access spaces should be "designed and built to encourage diverse, Bay-related activities along the shoreline", to create a "sense of place", and "designed for a wide range of users". The Guidelines further state that "[v]iew opportunities,

shoreline configuration and access points are factors that determine a site's inherent public access opportunities."

The project sponsor is proposing an approximately 2,672-square-foot viewing terrace, 1,600 square feet of which will be available for sitting and viewing purposes, an approximately 2,800-square-foot portion of the covered ferry pier, available for the public's use during ferry operation hours, and three possible trail connections to connect the ferry terminal with the offices to the north and south of the Marina. WTA's ridership studies forecast approximately 3,000 daily passenger trips to and from South San Francisco by 2025, initially providing service from destinations in the East Bay and connected to employment centers via shuttle bus. It is also anticipated that a number of ferry commuters will connect to adjacent employment centers via bicycle.

The Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsor whether the proposed public access areas are sufficient to accommodate the expected level of use, designed to take advantage of existing site characteristics and opportunities, and include appropriate site amenities. Additionally, the Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsor on whether the proposed public access areas and improvements maximize user comfort by designing for the weather and day and night use, and maximize opportunities for sitting and viewing.

2. **Does the proposed project maintain and enhance the visual quality of the Bay, shoreline and adjacent developments?** The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that "the design character of public access areas should relate to the scale and intensity of the proposed development." In order to achieve this objective, the Guidelines suggest "using building footprints to create a diversity of public spaces along the Bay", "using forms, materials, colors and textures that are compatible with the Bay and adjacent development" and "utilizing the shoreline for Bay-related land uses as much as possible..."

The proposed ferry terminal would be elevated approximately three feet above the current grade and is intended to be an open and transparent structure that would create a visually attractive identity for the new ferry service. The materials and appearance of the proposed new ferry terminal would be similar to the Vallejo and Oakland/Alameda ferry terminals located at the Ferry Building in San Francisco, with the exception that one side of the covered pier structure at South San Francisco would be enclosed with transparent glass. In order to minimize fill in the Bay and to create a more elegant and simple design, the project sponsor is proposing a single-pile support for the pier.

The Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsor whether the proposed project design complements and enhances the visual quality of the surrounding site. Advice is sought on whether the building form, materials, and colors would create an attractive addition to adjacent development and would be compatible with the Bay. The Board should also advise on whether the viewing terrace is appropriately sited and contributes to the diversity of public spaces along the Bay.

3. **Are the connections to the proposed public access areas adequate to lead the public to and along the project site?** As stated above, the Bay Plan policies on Transportation require that transportation projects on the Bay shoreline and bridges over the Bay provide pedestrian and bicycle paths that will either be a part of the Bay Trail or connect the Bay Trail with other regional and community trails. The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that, "access areas are utilized most if they provide direct connections to public rights-of-way such as streets and sidewalks..." and "should be planned in collaboration with local governments". The Guidelines further state that this may be accomplished by "incorporating the designated Bay Trail route into shoreline projects and providing clear and continuous transitions to adjacent

developments”, “coordinating shoreline public access with...local municipalities to provide for connections to trail and public use areas that may be planned for the future” and “promoting safe pedestrian and bicycle access...by...providing safe, enhanced crosswalks.”

The project sponsor is proposing three possible trail connections at the site to provide pedestrian and bike connections from the ferry terminal to the offices located north and south of the site. Option 1 would enhance an existing north-south Bay trail connection for pedestrian and bike access. Option 2 would complete a portion of a new north-south Bay trail connection in a location that is currently occupied by the Harbor Patrol parking lot. Option 3 would complete a segment of the Bay trail north of the Marina.

The Board should advise the Commission and the project sponsor on whether the proposed project provides adequate connections from the ferry terminal to the public access areas, the Bay Trail and adjacent developments to the north and south. The Board should also advise on whether the proposed connections promote safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the Bay, whether they provide the necessary links needed at the site, and whether they provide clear and continuous transitions to the existing trails and pathways currently at the site.

4. **Are the public access areas adequately designed to address sea level rise?** The Bay Plan policies on the safety of fills state in part that, “[t]o prevent damage from flooding, structures on fill or near the shoreline should have adequate flood protection including consideration of future relative sea level rise as determined by competent engineers.” Additionally, the policies state that, “[t]o minimize the potential hazard to Bay fill projects and bayside development from subsidence, all proposed development should be sufficiently high above the highest estimated tide level for the expected life of the project or sufficiently protected by levees...”.

According to the project applicants, mean higher high water at the site is at 7.17 feet and the interpolated highest observed water level (from available data) is 10.17 feet. According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the 100-year water level for Oyster Point is projected to be 10.7 feet above mean lower low water (MLLW). The existing grade of the adjacent land area at the Marina is approximately 10 feet above mean lower low water (MLLW). The viewing terrace and pier is proposed to be constructed at 13 feet above MLLW which would place it at approximately three feet above the highest observed water level and 2.3 feet above the Corps’ projected 100-year water level. The 2006 California Climate Action Team Report to California’s Governor projects the following sea level rise scenarios: (1) a low rate of 0.08 inches (2 mm) per year or 4 inches over 50 years; (2) a medium rate of 0.18 in (4.6 mm) per year or 9 inches over 50 years; and (3) a higher rate of 0.33 in (8.4 mm) per year or 16.5 inches over 50 years.

The Board should advise on whether the proposed public access areas, in particular, the viewing terrace and pier is designed to adequately address sea level rise. If these areas as proposed are not adequate to address sea level rise, the Board should advise whether the project applicants should address the impacts of future sea level rise on public access now as part of the proposed project, or in the future, through continued maintenance of the public access areas.